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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

REPORT

CD NO.

COUNTRY Bulgaria

SUBJECT Composition of New Armored Divisions;
Plans for Expansion

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1. The Bulgarian Army has recently undergone a complete reorganization and re-equipping program. The former armored brigades, patterned after the German Panzer units, have not existed as such since 9 September 1944. However, the changes in tables of organization and equipment have been accelerated lately.
2. Under the present plans of the Bulgarian General Staff an armored division or unit is to be assigned to each of the four existing armies in Bulgaria. This has been partially accomplished and the following are the organized units to date:
 - a. 1 Armored Division was assigned to First Army in Sofia. The entire division is housed at the former reserve officers school in Gorna Banya.
 - b. 2 Armored Brigade was assigned to Second Army at Plovdiv. This brigade is composed of two full-strength tank battalions, one of which is located in Plovdiv and the other in Kazanluk. The workshop and ordnance battalion, the anti-tank, anti-aircraft, and other component units are located in Karlovo. They are in skeleton form only.
 - c. 3 Armored Brigade was assigned to Third Army in Sliven. At the present time it consists of only one tank battalion.
3. The 4 Armored Brigade which will be formed and assigned to Fourth Army in Pleven has not been activated and estimations are that it will not be activated until May 1951.
4. The tank school at Botevgrad furnishes the units with gunners, drivers, and tank commanders. This school is presently housed in barracks formerly used by a battalion of 25 Infantry Regiment.
5. The chief of armored troops has his headquarters in Sofia. He heads a separate staff within the army which is now designated as the Staff for Armored Troops.

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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6. The composition of the present armored division is as follows:

- a. Divisional staff - This staff comprises the staff officers assigned to the divisional commander, as well as the usual headquarters units. There is a motorized anti-aircraft unit composed of six vehicles on which 12.7 mm. machine guns are mounted. There is also an anti-tank unit composed of 12 ZIS trucks on which 50 mm. anti-tank guns are mounted.
- b. Two armored brigades - Composed of two tank battalions. These battalions have between 48 and 60 tanks each.
- c. Reconnaissance squadron - This squadron is composed of 50 Broniford (sic) cars.
- d. Assault engineer battalion (Pionerno Shtourmova Drouzhina) - Composed of two combat engineer companies armed with Schmeisser machine pistols. There is also a pontoon company within the battalion which carries one complete sectional bridge. There is no indication that mine laying or mine detector troops will be assigned to this battalion.
- e. Divisional hospital - About the size of a company and completely motorized. This is the only unit in the Bulgarian Army that has completely motorized ambulances.
- f. Communications company - Composed of two sections: the field telephone section and the radio section. The radio section has five Lorenz sets on motor vehicles.
- g. Supply battalion - Completely motorized and has an unknown number of ZIS gasoline trucks.
- h. Ordnance company - Has an engineer officer in command and maintains a work and repair shop. At the present time 1 Armored Division has about fifteen German retriever tanks (12 ton Buessing) which tow the broken down tanks to the ordnance shop. They have a total of three tank recovery trucks (18 ton Famo).

7. The armored battalion is broken down as follows:

- a. Four tank companies - With 12 to 16 tanks each. Each tank company has three tank platoons of four or five tanks each. Each platoon in turn is sub-divided into two sections.
- b. Ordnance platoon - Furnishes first echelon maintenance only. This platoon does not carry spare parts.
- c. Supply company (Oboz) - This company maintains the kitchens for all the troops in the battalion. It furnishes the vehicles to carry food down to the company. There is a medical detachment within this company composed of one doctor and several aid men (including the Soviet type "Felchers").

8. At the present time there are 450 tanks in the Bulgarian Army. All tanks are Type T-34 which the Soviets have furnished over the past two years. Some of the defects of the T-34 are: the guns are hard to swerve from one position to another because they are hand-operated; the turrets become stuck on the cog track, and because they are manually operated and very heavy, they are extremely hard to repair. Observation from within the tank is extremely poor. The armored troops are presently undergoing special training in observation in order to partially rectify this defect. The T-34 is especially blind to the rear between the turret and the exhaust. (If a soldier is near enough he can place a magnetic mine in this vulnerable spot.) Most of the T-34 tanks presently in the Bulgarian Army are old reconditioned Soviet tanks.

9. Each tank is supposed to be equipped with a Soviet-made 10 watt radio. They are very poor in quality and frequently transmission is impossible and reception extremely poor. At present all tanks have receivers, but transmitters have been placed only in the personal tanks of the company and

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battalion commanders. The soldiers find that the old German Telefunken radios were far superior to the new Soviet ones. Each tank has a crew of from four to five men. The commanding officers of battalions and companies have in addition to their tanks a personal jeep, of Soviet manufacture, assigned to them.

10. The commander of armored troops is now General Peicho Peichev. Formerly a reserve officer trainee (Feldwebel-Shkolnik), he was subsequently sent to the USSR for two years of study in the Soviet tank school. He formerly commanded 1 Armored Division. The present commander of 1 Armored Division is Major General Ganev whose previous positions had been Commanding General of 1 Infantry Division and Deputy Commander of Third Army. The 1 Brigade of 1 Division is commanded by Colonel Stoyanov who is 27 years old and a former partisan. Captain Zahariev, presently commander of one of 1 Division battalions, is believed to be the only old line regular army officer of company grade in the division. The commanding officer of the ordnance company is Major Nachko Pouskov who is an old and well-trained engineer officer. The chief of the ordnance workshop is Captain Todor Penchev.
11. All the vehicles in the armored division are ZIS and Molotov types, and all are new. The 1 Armored Division with few exceptions is now completely equipped with vehicles called for in the table of equipment.
12. The main railroad station for First Army supplies is on the spur line that extends to the rear of Seminary Hill in Sofia. During November and December 1950, 50 armored cars, 20 tanks, and an unknown quantity of anti-tank guns, artillery guns, and heavy machine guns were unloaded at this station.

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